



EDXC Conference 2013 in Portugal

Report by Alan Pennington



This year's European DX Council (EDXC) Conference was held in Figueira da Foz, a town on the Atlantic coast of the Centro region of Portugal, at the mouth of the Mondego river. It's a 200 kilometre drive north of Lisbon, a three hour (€15) ride on the Rede Expressos coach from the capital. The Conference ran from 6th to 9th September but myself and Dave Kenny arrived at the conference hotel, Sweet Residence & Gardens, a day before most of the other delegates arrived, so had time to visit the long sandy beach at Figueira da Foz whose name literally means the fig tree at the mouth. Our hotel had a nice outdoor pool, warmer than the surprisingly chilly Atlantic!



The Conference was well organised throughout by Mika Palo (a Finn living in Portugal) and João Gomes (director at Portuguese tour specialists Shiny Day www.shinyday.biz).



The next day we had chance to meet old friends and make new ones in the evening at the welcome drinks in the hotel bar. As well as conference papers, we were also given straw hats – very useful as we enjoyed hot sunny weather (30°C+) throughout the six days we were there! The thirty conference participants (*most pictured in photo above by João Gomes*) included only one from Portugal – Portugal apparently has no DX club, and although there are a few well-known DXers, only one attended the conference. Participants came from Finland (11), Denmark (4), Sweden (4), UK (3), Germany (2), Russia (2), France (1), Italy (1), Japan (1) and Portugal (1). As well as me and Dave Kenny from the UK, BDXC member George Brown, a regular attendee at EDXC conferences, had flown in from Scotland.

After breakfast on Saturday morning, the opening conference session saw newly elected EDXC Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General, Kari Kivekäs and Jan-Mikael Nurmela (from Finland) address the audience with news that the EDXC website (www.edxc.org) was once again being updated (Tapio Kalmi as webmaster) and the EDXC news blog (www.edxc.wordpress.com) had also been reactivated by Jan-Mikael.

Kari Kivekäs (left) & Jan-Mikael Nurmela (right) - hats courtesy of ShinyDay travel!



The EDXC now also have a page on Facebook. Kari reported that the EDXC had a healthy bank balance (now relocated to Finland) and with virtually zero operating costs (all officials are honorary), membership fees had been halved. The EDXC was formed in 1967 as an organisation to bring together DX clubs and DXers in Europe. BDXC-UK is an observer member. In recent years EDXC's main activity has been organising

an annual conference where European DX Club representatives and others can meet formally (and informally) to discuss the DX hobby in Europe and exchange ideas – it is a unique forum in this respect. Projects planned in the near future include updating the EDXC country list which has not been updated since 2007 (see link to 16-page list on EDXC website) and recruiting new members (both clubs and individuals can join EDXC).

There were two proposals for cities to host the 2014 EDXC Conference which have been held annually (except in 2004) - St Petersburg (Russia) was proposed by Alexander Beryozkin and Nice (France) was proposed by Christian Ghibaudo. No vote was made to decide the venue yet, but Nice (maybe in late September 2014) seemed the preferred option. Other topics discussed were World Radio Day (13 February) and action against electrical interference. Germany was cited as the country with the best regulations against this QRM but how effective these are was contested. Manufacturers can self-certify products sold in the EEC with the CE mark which was deemed a drawback. Anker Petersen's (Danish club DSWCI) proposal to adopt a common format for DX loggings throughout Europe and the need to archive club magazines to preserve European DX hobby history were also topics discussed.

To close the morning session, former Secretary-General Risto Vähäkainu discussed the question "Quo Vadis EDXC? Quo Vadis DX?" (i.e. where's EDXC and DXing going). He gave a resume of the history of the hobby and the EDXC in particular. He also confirmed the EDXC Conference would be held in Finland in 2017 – that year marks the 50th Anniversary of EDXC and also 100th Anniversary of Finland gaining independence from Russia.



After a lunch break, we visited the Salt Museum in Figuera da Foz, which stands alongside the salt pans on the Mondego estuary (see left). The clear blue sky and hot sun made us realise why this is an ideal place to evaporate the water to produce salt!



Our coach then took us back into the town where (after a brief beer break) we walked to a local FM station in a small back street. “Foz do Mondego” 99.1 MHz. is one of only two local stations in Figueira da Foz (the other is Majorca FM on 92.1). Its logo features the clock tower on the seafront in the town – I had already heard the station (with RDS: FFOZ99.1) when listening on the beach the previous day. Originally established as a co-operative (so its full name began “Rádio Clube..”), the station’s Director of Programmes, Fernando Rodriguez showed us around the tiny studios whilst explaining the challenges facing the station in the current economic climate.

Right: Japanese DXer Toshi Ohtake (JSWC) and below Jan-Mikael Nurmela (SDXL) in the studios of Foz do Mondego 99.1 MHz.



Back at the conference hotel, we had a comprehensive presentation on “Radio in Portugal” which had been created by Portuguese DXer Luis Carvalho. Unfortunately Luis could not attend the conference in person, but Mika Palo and Portuguese DXer José Rainho, (photo below) were able to guide us through the presentation which included: ‘The History of Broadcasting in Portugal 1914-2013’; ‘Radio Stations in Portugal’ (the current situation) and ‘International Shortwave Broadcasting in Portugal (1930s to 2011)’ The wealth of detail was a lot to digest in one sitting, but fortunately it can be downloaded from: <http://www.mundodaradio.com/eventos/eventos.html> and viewed again at leisure, which I would recommend. The presentation included some photos of transmitter sites,

including the shortwave ones which are no longer active. RTP ‘suspended’ shortwave broadcasts in 2011 and the Deutsche Welle Sines site (which I remember better as the site for AWR in the 1970s) also closed the same year. The third major shortwave site in Portugal is at Glória do Ribatejo, used by Radio Free Europe. It too closed (in 1996) though some facilities should still be visible according to Luis. However there are plans to demolish the whole area to build tourist attractions. We



were to visit the two major national broadcasters in Portugal (public broadcaster RTP and private broadcaster Radio Renascença) two days later when we returned to Lisbon.

To conclude the evening conference session, Dario Monferini gave a colourful slide show of his travels in Peru in 2011, visiting many local radio stations with Roberto Pavanello. The photos are also online on the Play DX (Italy) website at: <http://www.playdx.com/foto/conosur2011/index.html>



Later that evening, we were able to sit by the pool and hear the only active medium wave station on the Portuguese island of Madeira – Porto Emissor do Funchal on 1530 kHz – thanks to Dario Monferini and his Degen 1103.

The traditional conference Banquet was held at the hotel on the Saturday night, where after the meal we were also entertained by folk dancers and musicians from a local village. Those DXers who had drunk too much wine and port also joined in the dancing! A presentation was also made

to Tibor Szilagyi, who had retired as EDXC Secretary-General at the end of 2012. *(above left: Tibor receives presentation from Kari Kivekäs as Alexander Beryozkin applauds)*

Early Sunday morning the coach left early for a day-long tour. The planned trip to the RDP Centro transmitter centre was sadly not possible, though we did stop by the



RDP MW transmitter site (Antena 1 on 630 kHz) at Santa Isabel, Carapinheira in Montemor-o-Velho district (photo above). Its aerial mast vanished in the early morning mist and the building itself was surrounded by a field with black bulls (good security though!).

Next we visited the historic city of Coimbra, once the capital of Portugal and home to one of the oldest Universities in Europe, which was awarded the status of a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2013. Of the many old buildings in Coimbra, particularly impressive were the University buildings around the Pátio e Paço das Escolas *(photo right)*, including the 18th century baroque Joane Library. No radio station visit in Coimbra though, but I did listen to Radio Universidade on 107.9 MHz (RDS: R.U.C.) the University's radio station on my Philips DA1200!



North of Coimbra, we visited the Quinta do Encontro vineyard for a very long lunch, where we tasted grapes growing on the vines out in the fields, as well as many wines over a three-course lunch at the distinctive modern wooden vinery centre (see:



<http://www.quintadoencontro.pt/pt/>) Somewhat sleepy after the wine, the coach then took us to the nearby wine museum at Anadia before returning to our hotel somewhat later than intended.

left: Dave Kenny tastes grapes in the vineyard.

The planned showing of a film about the Hörby (Sweden) transmitter site sadly had to be postponed as a result, but the film is available online to view at: <http://vimeo.com/38682048> There was time however to enjoy a talk and slide presentation by Anker Petersen about his travels to Malaysia and Sumatra last year. As well as beautiful photos, included were details of his DX logs made there. A photo from Sumatra is on the cover of the 2013 DSWCI



‘Domestic Broadcasting Survey’!

Our final night in Figueira da Foz was marked by a farewell meal at a local fish restaurant, within walking distance of the hotel, which was crowned by the arrival of an EDXC cake complete with EDXC logo in icing! (see *right*) Enough food and drink for one day though as we had to get up early the following day for the return to Lisbon!



Back in Lisbon, our first visit was to the modern headquarters of the national public broadcaster, RTP, in the east of the city (see *photo below*). Our guide was RTP’s Rui Martins, who showed us around radio and TV studios and answered questions about the broadcaster. RTP has three main domestic radio channels: Antena 1 on FM, MW and satellite (news & current affairs, culture and Portuguese music); Antena 2 on FM only (classical music, cultural programmes) and Antena 3 on FM only (pop, rock, dance music). In addition, RDP Africa is on FM in Lisbon, Coimbra and

Faro and on satellite (and also on FM in some former Portuguese colonies in Africa). RDP Internacional is currently only on satellite and on FM in East Timor (shortwave was 'suspended' in 2011). The three main channels are also on FM in the Azores and on Madeira (plus Antena 1 is also on MW in the Azores). RDP began experimental DAB transmissions in 1998 but DAB broadcasts were stopped in 2011.

We had seen a few old radios and TV cameras in the reception area of the RTP HQ, but we were then taken to a separate modern RTP museum building with many old radios, TVs, tape recorders etc, plus an old recreated studio complete with gong (for the time signal!) and xylophone (for interval signal!). We had an English-speaking guide, though the museum labels are naturally all in Portuguese. Not really enough time to do the museum justice, but the equally



impressive online museum at: <http://museu.rtp.pt> does include some of the exhibits and has an English option. My favourite exhibits were the stylish Philco Predicta 1958 TV (photo right) and Schneider Nocturne (1951 Radio with VHF). But I was surprised to see an Icom IC-R71A (1984) in a museum! You can tour the actual museum online by going to: <http://museu.rtp.pt/#/en/exposicao>. The online museum has film and audio also and is well worth a visit, once you have mastered the navigation (as is the real museum if you are in Lisbon)!



After a break for lunch at the modern Parque dos Nacoes, developed alongside



the River Tagus estuary for the Expo '98 exhibition, our coach took us to the Radio Renascença HQ in central Lisbon (photo below). In contrast to the modern RTP HQ this was a really old building amongst narrow old streets, so narrow our coach had to drop us some distance away. Outside there was little visible sign it was a major radio station, apart from 'Radio Renascença' on a rusty P (parking) sign! However, Radio

Renascença station RFM has been the most listened to radio station in Portugal in recent years, so outward appearances are not everything – it's what goes out on air that matters! (In 2013 Radio Comercial pipped RFM for top spot however). Inside the building was also old-fashioned in appearance with a wide wooden staircase leading up



from the high entrance hall. We were taken to an auditorium to be warmly welcomed by João Porto from the station's marketing department and a colleague from the engineering side. Radio Renascença is a private station owned by the Portuguese Catholic church, although its broadcasts are mainly secular in nature. As well as Radio Renascença itself (RR), which broadcasts news, current affairs, music and religious programmes and services, it also owns RFM (rock & pop music), Radio Sim (oldies, targeting 55+ age group) and Mega Hits (youth music). All Renascença broadcasts are on FM except Radio Sim which uses thirteen mediumwave transmitters. Some Radio Sim transmitters are running on low power to save money, notably 594 kHz at Muge (using a 1 kW standby transmitter instead of its main 100 kW unit) and one is currently off air. Radio Renascença used to broadcast on shortwave in the

1980s (from the Muge site) for two hours each day (6-8pm) to Europe and Brazil "at huge cost but no income", hence the broadcasts being dropped. João told us RR had no contact with any other Catholic stations such as Radio Maria, but receives Vatican Radio e.g. for special broadcasts by the Pope.

João then took us a tour of the stations' studios which seemed rather old and cramped compared to RDP's. We were fortunate to see well loved presenter Helena Almeida on air in the Radio Sim studio (see photo



below right).

Following our visit to Radio Renascença, our coach took us on a quick tour of some of the sights of Lisbon, after which we said farewell to some of the conference participants. However, Dave and I were staying two extra days in Lisbon, along with some other delegates. The following day we bought an all-day public transport ticket, and accompanied by Risto Vähäkainu travelled by tube, bus and old tram to see the castle, cathedral and other landmarks.

On our final day we had a more relaxing time. We walked up through the Parque Eduardo VII close to our hotel (HF Fenix Lisboa) to visit the beautiful Estufa Fria gardens and hot houses. After a nice lunch in the park I sat in the shade and did the following FM bandscan on my Philips



DA1200 handheld set with its headphone wire aerial. One thing I learned from Luis Carvalho's excellent presentation on Portuguese radio at the conference was that in 1988 there were an estimated 500-800 pirate stations in Portugal. On 24 December 1988 they all had to stop broadcasting and apply for a licence and 300 resumed broadcasting in 1989 as private licensed local stations. However I'm not sure in present-day Lisbon, how many pirates are broadcasting (if any) – so the bandscan below lists all I heard, mainly IDed through their RDS:

Bandscan Lisbon 11th September 2013

Freq	ID/RDS	Freq	ID/RDS	Freq	ID/RDS
87.6	RDS (=RDS!)	95.3	TROPICAL	101.9	ORBITAL
88.0	MEGAFM-S	95.7	ANTENA_1	102.2	SIM_PAL
88.2	ULTRA_FM	96.2	Unid rock	102.6	OXIGENIO
88.7	ANTENA_2	96.4	"M80 Faro"	103.0	SMOOTH
88.9	?	96.6	STAR_FM	103.4	RR
89.1	LEZIRIA	96.8	COMRCIAL	103.6	ANTENA_3
89.5	_T_S_F_	97.1	Vida FM	103.9	SESIMBRA
89.9	RFM	97.4	COMRCIAL	104.3	M80
90.2	RR	97.8	RADAR	104.8	SUPER_FM
90.4	NSTALGIA	98.1	Unid	105.0	RR?
90.6	ANTENA_2	98.3	Unid	105.2	ANTENA_3
90.9	POPULAR	98.7	RAD_BAIA	105.4	105.4 (=RDS!)
91.2	Unid mx/talk	99.2	ANTENA_1	105.8	RR
91.4	IRIS_FM	99.4	ANTENA_1	106.2	CIDADE_T
91.6	CIDADEFM	99.8	COMRCIAL	106.4	carrier
92.0	AMALIA	100.0	ANTENA_3	106.6	RFM
92.4	MEGAHITS	100.3	ANTENA_3	106.8	RFM
92.8	HORIZ.FM	100.6	AMALIA	107.2	VODAFONE
93.2	RFM	100.8	MEO_SW	107.5	M80
94.4	ANTENA_2	101.1	BEST_FM	107.7	Record FM?
94.7	Unid	101.3	RFM?		
95.0	95FMAMOR	101.5	AFRICA		



Many thanks to Mika Palo and João Gomes at Shiny Day for organising a great conference for the EDXC. This was my first visit to Portugal and I learnt a lot about its history, people and of course radio stations in a very busy six days. One thing I do need to learn more of is the Portuguese language though (which would be useful DXing Brazilian stations also!).

(Alan Pennington © BDXC-UK 2013)